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# The American Economic Colossus: A Foreshadow of Endtime Babylon or Literal Fulfillment?

## – PART II –



In last month's column, we concluded that a global "trap" is rapidly taking form. At a national level, America (and its other sister countries) is gorging into debt as never before. According to today's worldly prophets, common sense and scriptural perspectives have apparently become outmoded.

One doesn't need to be schooled in the lofty professions to recognize the changing winds. The lender successfully sells the false promise of consumer freedom (the opposite of Proverbs 22:7), bad is exchanged for good, stewardship is seen as a vice and a hindrance, people work to consume rather than consume to live, and much of society is living "by bread alone."

We were left with this speculative question: Do the trends

and conditions in America today more closely parallel a future biblical Israel or the literal Babylon of Revelation 18? And, depending on the answer, what are the endtime implications?

We concluded that without a doubt, the United States comprises the money center of the world at this time — the so-called "ground zero" of the mammon-spirit. Moreover, we concluded that something has gone astray, that things are up-

side down and that a rapid downward slide is evident in America.

### Many Biblical Parallels

Israel and Judah both experienced similar times and conditions as America and other countries today. As it turned out then, God ultimately pronounced a harsh judgment upon both after they did not heed the many warnings from God's prophets.



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### Consider just some warnings on these themes:

- Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes! Cease to do evil, Learn to do right! Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, and correct the oppressor. Defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:16-17).

- There is a conspiracy of prophets in the midst of her, like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in the midst of her" (Ezekiel 22:25).

- The people of the land have used oppression and extortion and have committed robbery; yes, they have wronged and vexed the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 22:29).

- For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely" (Jeremiah 6:13).

- Hear this, O you who would swallow up and trample down the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail and come to an end, Saying, When will the New Moon festival be past that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath that we may offer wheat for sale,

making the ephah small and the shekel great and falsifying the scales by deceit." That we may buy the poor

for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals; yes, and sell the refuse of the wheat?" (Amos 8:4-6).

As can be seen, many of the admonitions that the prophets pronounced refer to economic conditions, wealth imbalances, greed, oppression of the poor, commerce, corruption, and so on. Significantly, the powerful and the establishment rulers were deceitful and oppressive, driven by greed. As a result, everything was turned upside down. We see the same conditions today in many societies in very sophisticated form.

There are many false prophets on Wall Street, in Washington and in similarly aligned centers around the globe. Their deception is of legendary proportion. Most of these people are lap dogs who earn high rewards for their inventive and twisted prophecies. They actively turn what is bad into something good. According to them, the new received wisdom is this: "What seems bad is actually good! Believe it because you want to believe what we say." Or "Peace and prosperity lie ahead. God Bless America."

Quoting a noted constitutional law expert, "Nowhere will the Establishment demand the

General Government's lap-dog subservience more than with respect to money and banking. For the Establishment's power in every domain largely depends upon its control over — and ability to draw unearned profits from — the coffers of money and banking. Always remember that the two greatest powers of government are 'the power of the purse' and 'the power of the sword.' Control over one very often results in control over both."<sup>1</sup>

May our brief exposure of organized oppression and greed suffice. It is an unsavory topic. The point to recognize is that many are being oppressed for the sake of the greed-laden, power-lusting priorities of rulers and elites.

### Whitewashed Oppression and Exploitation

The "over-consuming, spendthrift" American may be a well-recognized image around the world — the compulsive shopper and the "mall rat." But this image is not entirely accurate. Yes, the shoppers of America and other high-income countries are big consumers. In fact, they may even be "born to buy" as a recent book makes the case.<sup>2</sup> However, it is much closer to the truth to see most people as trapped by the economic and structural realities around them in America. Many people don't want to be in the financial or social circum-



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stances that they find themselves. In many ways, the average American is exploited, manipulated and coerced into enslavement. Although individuals should not escape accountability for their personal affairs, it is possible to be oppressed.

Consider the following facts:

- According to a recent report (one of among many) over one-fourth of America's families are considered poor — meaning they have trouble surviving financially. Yet, these low-income families work hard, an average of 2,500 hours per year, equivalent to 1.2 jobs.<sup>3</sup>

- According to a survey by Expedia.com last year, 63 percent of Americans work more than 40 hours a week, with some 50 percent exceeding the 50-hour a week mark. A recent report from the OECD<sup>4</sup> documents that the average hours worked per person in America has risen 20 percent between 1970 and 2002. Canada and New Zealand also experienced a large increase in labor hours. By contrast, every other country in the 30-country survey (with the exception of 5) enjoyed less hours worked per person. Remarkably, France experienced a 21 percent decline in

hours worked over this period. (This extreme in France seems to be reversing somewhat.)

- A primary reason for the worsening quality of life and financial conditions is the disintegration of the family. Twenty-six percent of all children under 18 living in the USA live in a one-parent household.<sup>5</sup> Approximately one-half of American households are headed by unmarried people.<sup>6</sup> Single occupant households accounted for 25.5 percent of all US households in 2000, up from 13.1 percent in 1960.<sup>7</sup>

- In the early 1950s, all households combined had total debt (including mortgages) amounting to less than 25 percent of the annual amount of national income. Today, this figure is now higher than 100 percent; more than four times as large, in relative terms.

- As recently as 1974, the average American household was able to save more than 10 percent of income after paying their taxes. Today, the average household saves less than 2 percent of after-tax income. Given the wealth skew statistics already cited, what this really means is that today the vast majority of

American families experience negative savings each and every year.<sup>8</sup>

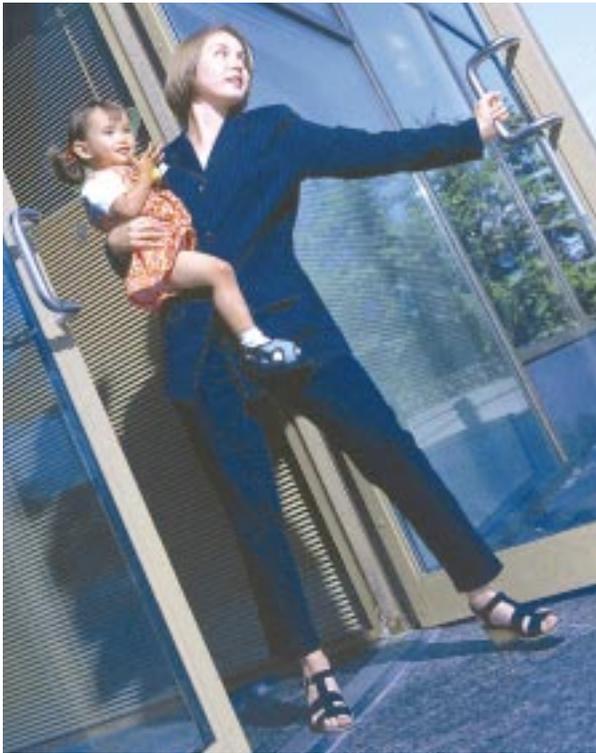
- The modern married mother is now nearly twice as likely to have a full-time job as to stay home. In 1965 only 21 percent of working women were back at their jobs within six months of giving birth to their first child. Today, that figure is higher than 70 percent.<sup>9</sup>

- The average two-income family today faces a 1-in-16 chance that in any given year, at least one partner will lose his or her job.<sup>10</sup>

- In America today, by foregoing childbearing, a woman decreases her chances of going bankrupt by 66 percent. Having a child is now the single best predictor that a woman will end up in financial collapse.<sup>11</sup>

- In 1981, the median family filing for bankruptcy owed 80 percent of the total annual income in credit card and other non-mortgage debts. By 2001, that figure had nearly doubled to 150 percent of annual income.<sup>12</sup>

Many more statistics could be cited. Something awry is happening despite the constant propaganda that America is becoming more prosperous and



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distribution of any major country in the world. The results of various surveys vary and the technical details in this debate are complex. However, it is likely that the richest

was widely interpreted as a blow to the sense of German egalitarianism. And yet, Germany's wealth gap is relatively small compared to that of America. The richest 10 percent of the population (not 1 percent as in the USA) owns 47 percent of private wealth in Germany

successful. These and other statistics suggest continuing deterioration. Clearly, we see that same things that for which the prophets admonished Israel and Judah: enslavement and oppression of the poor and the average citizen.

### The Growing Gap Between Rich and Poor

Recently, *Forbes* magazine again published the results of its annual wealth survey. It reported that the "collective net worth of the world's 691 billionaires is \$2.2 trillion, up \$300 billion from the combined net worths of the 587 people listed last year."

Even though the average American has a negative savings rate (meaning we are falling further into debt each year) wealth and the wealthy are still idealized and celebrated. America today has the most skewed wealth

1 percent of the nation's population may account for as much as 40 percent or more of the country's privately held wealth. It is an extreme condition. It is a clear emblem of a developing trap — disaster and crisis. History bears adequate testimony that this is true.

It is interesting to observe the different attitudes towards the "heaping up of wealth" (James 5:3) between Europe and America. A recent event in Germany illustrates the contrast. In March 2005, the government headed by Social Democrat leader, Gerhard Schroeder, came under heavy pressure — literally facing a national outpouring of concern because a report had been released admitting what was considered an embarrassing fact for German society: The rich people in Germany had become richer and the poor poorer in recent years. It

The same attitude generally prevails across most of Europe. For example, France's national motto is "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*" (liberty, equality and brotherhood). The essence of this point is not to condone the European ideas of socialism but to point to the different attitude to exploitation by the rich.

### Endtime Exploitation

As one well-known columnist in the USA recently wrote, "This is the era of entrenched exploitation. All sacrifices will be made by working people and the poor, and the vast bulk of the benefits will accrue to the rich."<sup>14</sup> Perspectives such as these of course inspire hot political debates, which is not intended here — nor is this a diatribe against the "rich." It is OK to be blessedly rich; after all, Abraham was wealthy. The word "rich" today has been co-opted to actually

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mean “rich oppressors.” Not everybody who is rich is an oppressor. That said, many of the rich and today’s society elites are oppressors. That’s what James was talking about when he reminded, “Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?” (James 2:6).

The allegation holds for America and the world alike. It is a global condition: Widespread oppression is sanctified across the world as never before in the name of profits, “business success,” “high productivity,” and “maximal wealth creation.” But it is a condition that exists in America like in no other major country as if it were a common good. There is ample evidence for that statement.

In the developed world, the global money snare is by far the most advanced in America. That means many people are blinded, ensnared and afraid. Oppression and entrapment are carried out and allowed at the highest levels. Crucially, these are the same aspects for which the Old Testament prophets castigated Israel and Judah — organized oppression and entrapment.

But why is this such a big deal? We must remember what Christ Himself said about His mission: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to tell the good news to the poor. He has sent me

to announce release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set oppressed people free” (Luke 4:18). He came to free the imprisoned and the oppressed.

#### Thoughts to Ponder

What will be the final outcome of a country that oppresses and exploits the poor and helpless? The book of Daniel provides a clear answer. In chapter 4 we read the account of Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a large tree that had been chopped down. Daniel told the king that the tree portrayed his kingdom and that it would be cut down with an ax. Moreover, his kingdom would be taken away from him for a period of seven years. This was decreed in order that Nebuchadnezzar would recognize that it was the Most High who rules, and not him. However, Daniel then warned the king with these words: “Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.”

We see in this verse that King Nebuchadnezzar was charged to be merciful to the poor if he wanted to avoid his prophesied fate. Apparently, Babylon was a society that abused its poor, not caring much for the helpless and perhaps careless casualties of

greed and the “oppressive rich.” While Nebuchadnezzar did lose his kingdom for seven years, not all of this prophecy unfolded at that time. As such, this vision also speaks about the last days. The fact that the poor of this world are not shown any mercy is a sign of impending judgment — ultimately a seven-year Tribulation.

The Bible clearly points out that the world will be marked by massive, endemic deception and greed at the time before the return of Christ. Deception and oppression will be officially sanctioned. It will be the rule of the day, the stock and trade of governments, businesses and elites. We see this image today in the affairs of America and its sibling countries. Another form of this type of oppression will yet occur under the Antichrist.

Is there a remedy? With God anything is possible. However, America faces the impediment that its society is so greedy, performance-oriented, and pressured by monthly debt-payments among other forces that it will not be able to afford to avoid a financial and chastening disaster. (The same will be true during the Apocalypse, if it is not the one and the same event.) In a sense, it is caught on a conveyor belt to discipline and judgment. The indulgence, partying (and oppression) will go on until it stops and not a moment sooner.



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Avoiding financial Armageddon and judgment means that one must come out from the money-addicted party before one succumbs to disaster or the Judgment Seat. However, the cost of coming out too soon is seen to be very high by most people. It means foregone gains, consumption, and fun — not to mention the ignominy of ridicule and mockery by friends and relatives. The vast majority of “fair-weather” Christians want to leave the party at the very last minute, only a few moments before the police break down the door at midnight, or Christ’s “midnight call.”

When disaster finally strikes America and its sibling countries, will it be the prelude or the trigger to the Great Tribulation? To this point we have primarily only dealt with domestic implications for America. In the final part of this series, we will present a case why America’s troubles could very well play a part in the trigger to the situation that the world will find itself during the Great Tribulation. The “oppressor” today has clearly taken on a global form. We also then finally address the question: America—a

foreshadow of endtime Babylon or literal fulfillment? (MC)

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Edwin Vieira; *Don't Count on Washington to Protect us From Looming Banking Crisis*, April 5, 2005. <http://www.newswithviews.com/Vieira/edwin6.htm>. Accessed April 9, 2005.
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